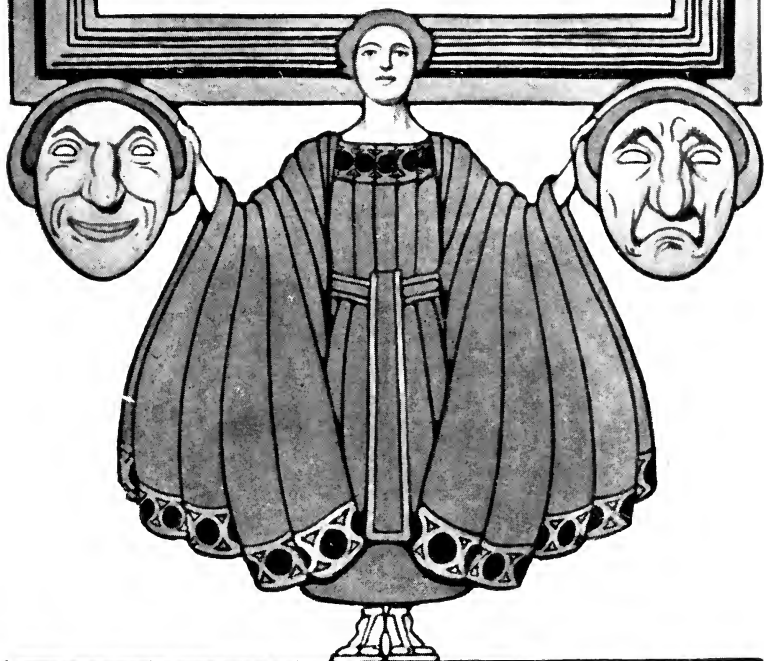


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A Cure for Hypnotism

Asa Steele



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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

A Cure for Hypnotism

A Farce in One Act

By

ASA STEELE

Author of "Greater Than War"



PHILADELPHIA
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

1919

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no 1

A Cure for Hypnotism

CHARACTERS

HARRY JANVIER	-	-	-	<i>a lively young man, full of fun</i>
MAUDE IVINS	-	-	-	<i>a pretty young woman</i>
JIM IVINS	-			<i>Maude's husband, a slim, nervous man of forty or thereabouts</i>

TIME OF PLAYING.—Thirty minutes.

STORY OF THE PLAY

The domestic bliss of the Ivins home has been sadly upset. Maude Ivins has become fascinated by a book on hypnotism, and tries it on Jim, who doesn't like it. Harry Janvier, an old friend, hears Jim's sad story and undertakes to cure Maude. He pretends she has hypnotized him, and that he now thinks he is her husband. When she objects to being kissed Harry goes wild. "I must break something!" He chases the now thoroughly frightened pair around the room. Jim yells for help. Maude breaks down. "I'm done with hypnotism." Harry tears up the book and laughs at them. The cure is complete.

COSTUMES, ETC.

HARRY. About twenty-five. Has a very jolly, confident manner. Wears business suit.

JIM. A little older, perhaps thirty. He is rather thin and nervous, and has slight cough. Business suit, and has on overcoat and hat at entrance.

MAUDE. A pretty young woman in the early twenties. Wears a handsome house gown.

PROPERTIES

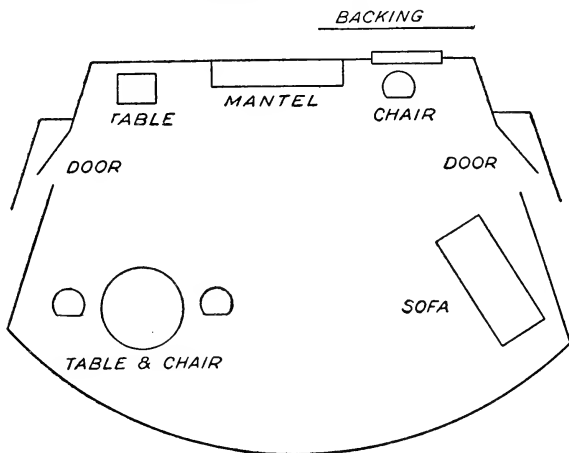
FOR HARRY: Several sofa cushions, and a chair light enough to be picked up and swung over his head.

FOR JIM: Overcoat and hat. Hat-box, containing a woman's hat of striking color and design. A stand or rack containing poker, tongs, etc., such as are used for an open fireplace.

FOR MAUDE: A small book. A vase, containing water and flowers.

OTHER PROPERTIES: Telephone on wall or table up R. and a bell to ring. On table down R. c. some books, a small bowl of flowers, a china ash-tray or other small china ornament. The china or glassware should be cheap, as it is to be swept from the table and probably broken during the play.

SCENE PLOT



SCENE.—Mrs. Ivins' sitting-room. Doors R. and L. Window up L. (may be omitted if preferred). Mantel and fireplace up C., with fire-irons on hearth. Vase of flowers on mantel. Small table holding telephone up R., or telephone may be on wall up R. Chair up L. Table and two chairs down R. c. On table are books, china ash-tray, bowl of flowers, or other ornaments, to be broken toward close of play. Down L. sofa, with cushions.



A Cure for Hypnotism

SCENE.—MRS. IVINS' sitting-room. *A bow window at the back, filled with growing plants. Doors, L. and R. A fireplace R., with mantel holding a clock and ornaments. In the fireplace a shovel and poker. A table R. C. with books, china ornaments and a bowl of water, filled with roses. Chairs R. and L. of table. A sofa L. C., with a number of cushions upon it. A telephone is fastened to the wall below the door, R.*

(At rise of curtain MAUDE IVINS is sitting on the sofa, L., deeply interested in reading a book.)

MAUDE *(reading)*. "To send a person into a hypnotic trance"—Do so—and so—— *(She makes the elaborate gestures of a trance medium.)* How fascinating! *(She reads again.)* "To bring a person out of a trance——"

(Enter JIM IVINS, L. He carries a large hat-box.)

IVINS. Home again, dearie! *(A little cough.)*
Ahem!

MAUDE *(turning to him with a little start)*. Oh! *(She begins to read again.)* It's only you.

IVINS. Only me! Ahem! Husbands don't seem to count for much around here.

(He puts the hat-box on the table, R. C., and takes off his hat and overcoat.)

MAUDE *(as she reads)*. I've found it at last! The secrets of hypnotism explained.

IVINS. Hypnotism? Curse it.

(He puts hat and overcoat on chair up L.)

MAUDE (*sharply*). What did you say?

IVINS (*meekly*). Yes, my dear! (*A little cough.*) Ahem! I said—"hypnotism! Bless it."

MAUDE. That's the first sensible word you've said in a week. But don't disturb me. (*As she reads.*) I've this new book to digest.

IVINS. I hope it chokes you!

MAUDE (*sharply*). Jim Ivins!

IVINS (*up c.*). Yes, my dear—ahem!

MAUDE. What did you say?

IVINS. I said I hope the book—ahem!—the book won't give you indigestion, my dear. (*The telephone bell up R. rings. IVINS answers the call.*) Hello! Yes, this is Mr. Ivins. Mr. Ivins! (*Pause.*) What? (*Very happy.*) Harry Janvier! How are you, old man? Thought you were in China. (*Pause.*) Just back, eh? May you call? Sure—delighted! Ahem! I'm married now, you know.—Yes, six months ago. I want you to meet my wife. We live at Number 77. Cleremont Avenue car. You'll be here in ten minutes? Good. (*He hangs up the telephone receiver and comes down R. to table.*) You hear, Maude. Really good news. My old pal, Harry Janvier, is coming in. He's been in business in China for six years. Dear old chap! We'll have a cozy little dinner for three——

MAUDE. Dine without me. I must finish this book.

(*She rises, crossing to c., where she stops, reading intently.*)

IVINS (*angrily*). See here, Maude—— (*MAUDE turns to him sharply. IVINS becomes very meek.*) Yes, my dear. Ahem! (*MAUDE sits at L. of table and starts to read her book. IVINS looks at her in despair, then opens the hat-box on the table and takes out a gorgeous hat.*) On my way home I saw a bit of millinery—a trifle—I thought it might please you.

(*He holds up the hat.*)

MAUDE (*not looking up from her reading*). Jim!

IVINS (*looking at the hat*). Ahem! I thought you'd like it.

MAUDE (*looking at the book and not seeing the hat*). It thrills me!

IVINS. It ought to. It cost me thirty dollars. (*He puts the hat on MAUDE'S head backward.*) There!

MAUDE. Pshaw!

(*She takes off the hat, looking at it indifferently.*)

IVINS. You said it thrilled you!

MAUDE. This fright? (*She throws the hat on the table carelessly, and resumes her reading.*) No, this book.

IVINS (*in despair*). Well, I'll be hanged!

(*He angrily replaces the hat in the hat-box.*)

MAUDE (*indicating her book*). This says I can hypnotize our bull terrier; make him think he's you!

IVINS. Then what would I be, the bull terrier? I like that! (*Imitating a dog.*) Bow! Bow! Ahem!

MAUDE. James Ivins! What are you doing?

IVINS. I feel as if I'm going mad!

(*He angrily puts the cover on the hat-box.*)

MAUDE (*reading from her book*). "One in a hypnotic trance may be made to think he is any one the medium may desire."

IVINS. I wish you'd make me think I was some other woman's husband.

MAUDE (*angrily*). Wretch!

(*She throws her book on the table R. C.*)

IVINS (*meekly*). Yes, my dear—ahem!

MAUDE. Say that again!

IVINS. I said "yes, my dear—ahem!"

MAUDE. That's not a remark; it's a disease. Your words before that?

IVINS. I said—ahem!—I wished you'd make me think I was some other woman's husband——

MAUDE. I thought so! James, you're impossible!

(She goes up.)

IVINS. Here I get mine!

(He collapses into chair at R. of table.)

MAUDE (*up c.*). I won't speak another word to you to-night!

(She exits quickly, R.)

IVINS (*thinking her still there*). If I may suggest, my dear—ahem! Hypnotism should be blamed, not me. Morning, noon and night I hear of nothing else. It has got you as completely, I may say—why, it's as bad as the drug habit! (*Enter HARRY JANVIER, L. He stops on seeing IVINS, standing up L. as the latter continues. IVINS, not noticing HARRY.*) I'd even give a month's wages, my dear, to cure you of this hypnotism. Then our marriage wouldn't seem like such a failure. I'd have a happy little home that was really happy! (*He pauses for a reply.*) Well, what have you to say to that? (*Receiving no answer, he turns and sees HARRY for the first time. HARRY laughs heartily.*) Harry!

HARRY. Jim! (*They meet at c., shaking hands.*) I say! It's good to see you!

IVINS. Same here, old fellow! Like our office days together! My! You look well. Stouter, perhaps. Life in China certainly agreed with you!

HARRY. Same to you, Jim. That is—well, I couldn't help hearing, as I came in. What's all this about not being happy?

IVINS (*sadly*). I haven't been happy for a month. I'm sorry to have to say it—ahem!—my wife has a craze for hypnotism.

HARRY. The deuce you say!

IVINS. Before I'd marry such a woman again, I'd run away with a Hottentot!

HARRY. A Hottentot! Isn't that putting it rather strong? Don't be disheartened. It's a long lane that has no turning.

IVINS. Marriage isn't a lane; it's a blind alley.

(Goes R.)

HARRY. Hard luck, old man! Wish I could help you. (HARRY takes from the table the book on hypnotism, reading the title.) "Secrets of Hypnotism," by Professor Bonnelly.

IVINS. The cause of it all.

(He sits R. of table, covering his face with his hands in despair. HARRY glances through the book, then turns to IVINS with a sudden inspiration.)

HARRY. By thunder —

IVINS. What?

HARRY. If I could —

IVINS. Could what?

HARRY. Cure your wife!

IVINS (quickly rising, joyfully). Harry! You think you could?

HARRY. I might make her sorry she ever heard of hypnotism!

IVINS. If you could, old man—why, it would mean new life to me!

HARRY (reflecting). She doesn't know me—there wouldn't be so much harm done if she'd dislike me — (After another moment of reflection.) I'll do it, Jim!

IVINS. Great!

HARRY. On one condition.

IVINS. What's that?

HARRY. Stand by me. Agree to everything I do and say.

IVINS. Will I? Why, I'll die with you! Ahem! But we mustn't let her know.

HARRY. Of course not. Go! Ask her to come in.

IVINS (going up toward door, R.). But we must be very, very careful! Ahem!

HARRY. Remember! You'll agree to everything I say and do!

IVINS. Everything! But—(glancing off R., timidly) we must be careful—ahem!

(Exit, R.)

HARRY (*laughs, then sits L. of table and begins to read from the book on hypnotism*). "To go into a trance"—ah—um—"the subject seems to sleep." That's easy enough, after living in China. (*Reading*.) "While in a trance, the subject speaks in a sepulchral voice." (*He speaks in a deep, hollow voice*.) I'll do that, all right. (*Reading*.) "To come out of a trance——" (*Closing the book and laying it on table*.) Hum—(*reflecting*) what shall I do while in the trance? (*With a sudden inspiration*.) I've got it! We'll cure her!

(IVINS reënters, R., followed by MAUDE. HARRY at once assumes the manner of an invalid.)

IVINS. Harry, my wife.

MAUDE (*coming down L. c.*). How do you do?

HARRY (*rising weakly, with a grimace of pain*). I feel wretched, thanks. (*Coughing and shivering violently*.) I wanted so much to meet you the moment Jim said you were an expert in hypnotism. I hoped you could use it to cure me.

(*He shivers violently*.)

MAUDE. Jim! Why didn't you say he was ill?

IVINS (*up c.*). Yes, my dear! Ahem!

HARRY (*coughing*). I am. Miserably ill. My doctor says that nothing short of the hibernating effect of hypnosis will give me relief. You see, I've very sensitive nerves. (*He shivers violently*.) The slightest thing makes them tremble like—(*shivering*) like an old flivver.

MAUDE. How very interesting!

HARRY. In China I had a fever.

MAUDE. A fever?

HARRY. That's what made my nerves like this.

(*Shivers violently*.)

MAUDE. Poor fellow! (*She goes to him*.) You'd make an ideal subject for a hypnotic trance!

HARRY. If you only would——

MAUDE. May I try?

(She slowly makes passes with her hands before his face, looking into HARRY's eyes intensely.)

HARRY. Don't look at me like that! Your eyes cut right through me! *(He covers his eyes with his hand, as if to shield them, then drops his hand and looks at her again.)* I can't resist! *(MAUDE again makes the passes.)* Stop it! Will you please stop it! Don't! You're hurting me! Ah——

(HARRY shivers. His eyes stare, his fingers twitch, then he stands rigid, apparently in a trance.)

MAUDE (L. C.). Now, Jim, carry him to the sofa.

(IVINS comes down to the R. of HARRY and takes him by the arm. HARRY's arm shoots out quickly at right angles from his body and strikes IVINS on the chest. With a cry, IVINS jumps back and falls into chair L. of table. IVINS rises and circles around to the L. of HARRY and takes his other arm, standing as far from HARRY as he can. HARRY's leg shoots out and kicks IVINS in the shins. IVINS groans and nurses his shins. MAUDE goes up C. She looks nervous.)

(After circling around HARRY again, IVINS goes up behind him, lowers HARRY's arm and brings his legs together. All this time, HARRY is very rigid.)

(IVINS now leans down and seizes HARRY around the waist from behind. HARRY seizes IVINS' trouser leg. The more IVINS pulls at HARRY, the higher HARRY pulls IVINS' leg. When IVINS' leg is high in air, he loses his balance and goes over backward, HARRY on top of him. IVINS picks himself up, looks at HARRY, who is still rigid, and lifts him up. IVINS drags HARRY to the sofa, L., and places him on it. MAUDE comes down behind the sofa and passes her hand over HARRY's forehead and eyes.)

MAUDE. How do you feel?

HARRY. Fine! You can do that all night.

MAUDE (*repeating the passes*). I mean—how else do you feel?

HARRY. I feel—I feel—how do I feel? Such a relief. (*With a sigh of contentment.*) Nerves all gone. The only other thing I feel is a desire, an insane desire—to break something!

(*He seizes the cushions on the sofa and throws two of them violently on the floor and two others to R. and up C. One of the cushions hits IVINS. HARRY throws the rest of the cushions to back, then sinks back on the sofa, shaking with suppressed laughter.*)

IVINS. Stop him, can't you?

MAUDE. People in trances do that! They break everything! (HARRY *begins to laugh very loud*. MAUDE *runs to the back of the sofa again and places her hands over HARRY'S eyes. HARRY gradually becomes quiet.*) Now I'm going to try Professor Bonnelli's experiment; make him think he's some one else.

IVINS. Who'll you make him think he is?

MAUDE. I'll make him think he's you!

IVINS. No! No! Maude darling! Who ever heard of two husbands; one telling on the other fellow?

MAUDE. You're afraid!

IVINS (*with feigned indifference*). Not at all! Ahem!

(*He goes up L. then crosses to R. MAUDE assumes a solemn demeanor and makes passes in front of HARRY'S face.*)

MAUDE (*to HARRY*). You are my husband, James Ivins! (*She pauses.*) Who are you?

HARRY. I'm Harry Janvier!

(*IVINS chuckles. MAUDE turns to him angrily. IVINS is suddenly very meek.*)

IVINS. Yes, my dear! Ahem! You see? You cannot do it. (*He comes down and sits R. of table.*)

MAUDE. He must come to it gradually! (*She repeats the passes in front of HARRY's face.*) You are my husband, James Ivins! (*A pause.*) Who are you?

HARRY. I'm—(*hesitating*) I'm Harry Janvier!

(*IVINS laughs heartily. MAUDE turns to him sharply.*)

IVINS. Yes, my dear! Ahem!

MAUDE (*again repeating the passes with HARRY*). You are my husband, James Ivins! (*A pause.*) Who are you?

HARRY (*hereafter mimicking IVINS' voice and manner*). I'm—I'm your husband, James Ivins! Yes, my dear! Ahem!

IVINS (*rising, alarmed*). See here! A joke's a joke, but —

MAUDE (*severely*). This is a triumph of science! (*MAUDE turns to HARRY, speaking sweetly.*) Now tell me, husband dear, what did you say about me to Harry Janvier?

IVINS (*protesting*). Maude! (*MAUDE turns to IVINS, severely.*) Yes, my dear! Ahem!

HARRY (*speaking slowly, imitating IVINS*). I, your husband, said to Harry Janvier—ahem!—that rather than marry such a woman again, I'd run away with a Hottentot!

MAUDE (*very angry*). James!

IVINS. Yes, my dear! Ahem!

MAUDE (*to IVINS*). You said that?

HARRY. Of course I said it!

IVINS. That's my finish!

(*He collapses into chair, R.*)

MAUDE. I'll discuss that with you later! (*HARRY is convulsed with laughter. He doubles up on the sofa, shaking. MAUDE draws away from him with a little shriek of alarm.*) James! Quickly! Hold him! Hold him! (*IVINS hastens L. to the sofa and*

tries to straighten out HARRY's body. Every time IVINS tries to approach HARRY, the latter kicks at him. IVINS finally straightens out HARRY on the sofa. MAUDE again goes up behind the sofa and repeats the passes. HARRY finally lies quietly.) You know who you are?

HARRY (*imitating IVINS*). Of course. I'm James Ivins, your husband. Just come home to my dear little wife! (*He seizes MAUDE's hand.*) Kiss me, dearie.

MAUDE (*astonished and angry*). How dare you!

HARRY. Haven't I the right? I'm your husband. Ahem! (*He rises, going toward MAUDE. MAUDE backs away from him. IVINS quickly interposes when HARRY tries to hug MAUDE, so that HARRY embraces IVINS instead. HARRY laughs and thrusts IVINS aside, again approaching MAUDE.*) Come! Kiss your husband!

IVINS (*intercepting HARRY again*). You mustn't kiss her!

HARRY. Why not? I like it!

IVINS (c.). Well, I don't!

MAUDE (R. c.). I'm not your wife! (*Embracing IVINS.*) Here's the man I love!

HARRY (L. c.). Leave that fellow! Come here!

(He again starts toward MAUDE.)

MAUDE (*retreating to extreme R.*). I won't!

HARRY. Come here!

IVINS (*pushing HARRY away*). Hands off my wife!

HARRY. Your wife? No! My wife! (*To MAUDE.*) I'm your husband! Didn't you tell me so yourself? Oh! This is too much! Let me break something!

(He throws IVINS aside and sweeps the ornaments from the table, R. c.)

IVINS. Wake him up! We won't have a thing left!

MAUDE (*timidly*). Ye-ye-yes. I'll wake him up! (*She approaches HARRY, violently making the passes. HARRY leans against the table, staring at her but making no other response.*) Now! Wake up! Wake up! (*HARRY does not respond. MAUDE repeats the passes.*) Jim—I'm not sure——

IVINS. You mustn't lose your nerve!

(*Comes down L. C. MAUDE goes around table to R.*)

MAUDE (*tearfully*). Why doesn't he wake up? What does the book say? (*She turns to table, picks up book, opens it anxiously.*) Here it is! (*Reading.*) "A sudden slap on the cheek——"

IVINS. A sudden slap on the cheek!

(*He starts to strike HARRY on the cheek. HARRY parries the blow and strikes IVINS on the cheek instead.*)

MAUDE. Now both do this together! (*MAUDE throws book on table and repeats the passes. IVINS, imitating her, tries to do likewise.*) Now he must wake up! (*To HARRY.*) Who are you?

HARRY (*still imitating IVINS*). I'm your husband, dearie! Ahem! (*Coughs.*)

MAUDE (*in despair*). Still in the trance!

(*Goes up C.*)

IVINS. Wake up! Wake up!

HARRY. Oh! I must break something!

(*He seizes the hat-box on the table and breaks it over IVINS' head, the latter's face protruding through it.*)

MAUDE. Give him a shock! Dash this in his face!

(*MAUDE takes the flowers from the vase on mantel or stand up C., comes down and thrusts the vase into IVINS' hands. IVINS throws the water in the jar into HARRY's face. MAUDE is down L. C.*)

HARRY (*to IVINS, fiercely*). Blackguard! You

take my wife! Now you'd drown me! (*He snatches up chair L. of table, and swings it threateningly.*) I'll end you both! (IVINS runs L., hiding behind MAUDE. HARRY advances L. MAUDE and IVINS hide behind each other in turn, retreating step by step, across L., up L., across and down R.) You can't escape me now!

MAUDE. Oh!

(*She hides behind IVINS, who still carries the vase, which he waves wildly.*)

HARRY. Where's the man who'd keep my wife from me!

(*IVINS hides behind MAUDE.*)

MAUDE. W-w-what a fool I've been!

HARRY. You repent? Give up hypnotism?

MAUDE. No—that is—oh!

(*HARRY swings his chair, and with a scream, MAUDE hides behind IVINS.*)

IVINS. Yes—yes! You'll give up 'most everything, won't you, dearie?

(*He pushes MAUDE forward, hiding behind her.*)

HARRY (*now down L., to MAUDE up L. C.*). You no longer believe in hypnotism?

MAUDE. How can I help believing? You're hypnotized, aren't you?

HARRY (*apart, glumly*). I'd not thought of that. (*He turns to MAUDE and IVINS again fiercely.*) Then take your punishment!

(*He advances toward them.*)

IVINS. S-s-h-e-e had best speak for herself!

(*He pushes MAUDE forward, hiding behind her.*)

HARRY (*now up C., to MAUDE, now up R. C.*). Prove that you're done with hypnotism!

MAUDE. How? How?

HARRY. Bring me your book on hypnotism! Say I'm not hypnotized!

MAUDE (*retreating down to R. of table*). But you are hypnotized!

HARRY. What? Not cured yet? Then I'll end you both!

(HARRY *makes a lunge at IVINS, who evades him.*

IVINS *drops vase, runs wildly up C. to fireplace, backs up to it, reaches out a hand blindly as though to find a poker, backs into stand of fire-irons, which upsets with a crash. IVINS then runs to window up L., or to door up L. if preferred.*)

IVINS. Help! Help! Murder!

(MAUDE *snatches up the book from table and extends it toward HARRY, in terror.*)

MAUDE. Take it! Take it! I'm done with hypnotism!

HARRY. You're cured? (*He laughs, suddenly dropping his wild manner and his mimicry of IVINS, and being himself again. He replaces chair near table.*) The murder's postponed! (*He bows to MAUDE, laughing.*) And you'll pardon me? Agree that the end justifies the means!

(*He takes book from MAUDE, tears it up, and throws it into the fireplace up C. As he does so, IVINS turns from window up L. and comes down L.*)

IVINS (*miserably*). Maude! Maude!

MAUDE. Darling!

(*She runs across L. to him and embraces him. HARRY comes down C. He raises his hands, "blessing" them and laughing heartily.*)

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